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ABSTRACT

In 1996, North Carolina began a 5-year evaluation of Alternative Learning Programs (ALPs). This report describes selected outcomes for students who participated in ALPs during 1995-96. These outcomes include performance on North Carolina End-of-Grade tests (elementary school) and performance on the End-of-Course(EOC) tests (high school) for Algebra 1, English 1, and Biology. Dropout information is also provided. Only about 10% of ALP students were proficient in these three EOC tests, in comparison with about 40 to 50% of the overall student population in North Carolina. The same was true with the End-of-Grade tests, with ALP students performing well below the general student population. There was generally more growth in end-of-grade scores for students with longer contact with ALPs. Findings show that ALP students have significant educational deficiencies that put them at risk of failure. ALP programs may be helping students improve academically, but they are also dealing with significant behavioral problems that take time away from academic instruction. Data also suggest that early intervention is most likely to be successful with ALP students. (Contains 22 figures.) (SLD)

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Alternative Learning Programs Evaluation: Part 2 Report

April 1997

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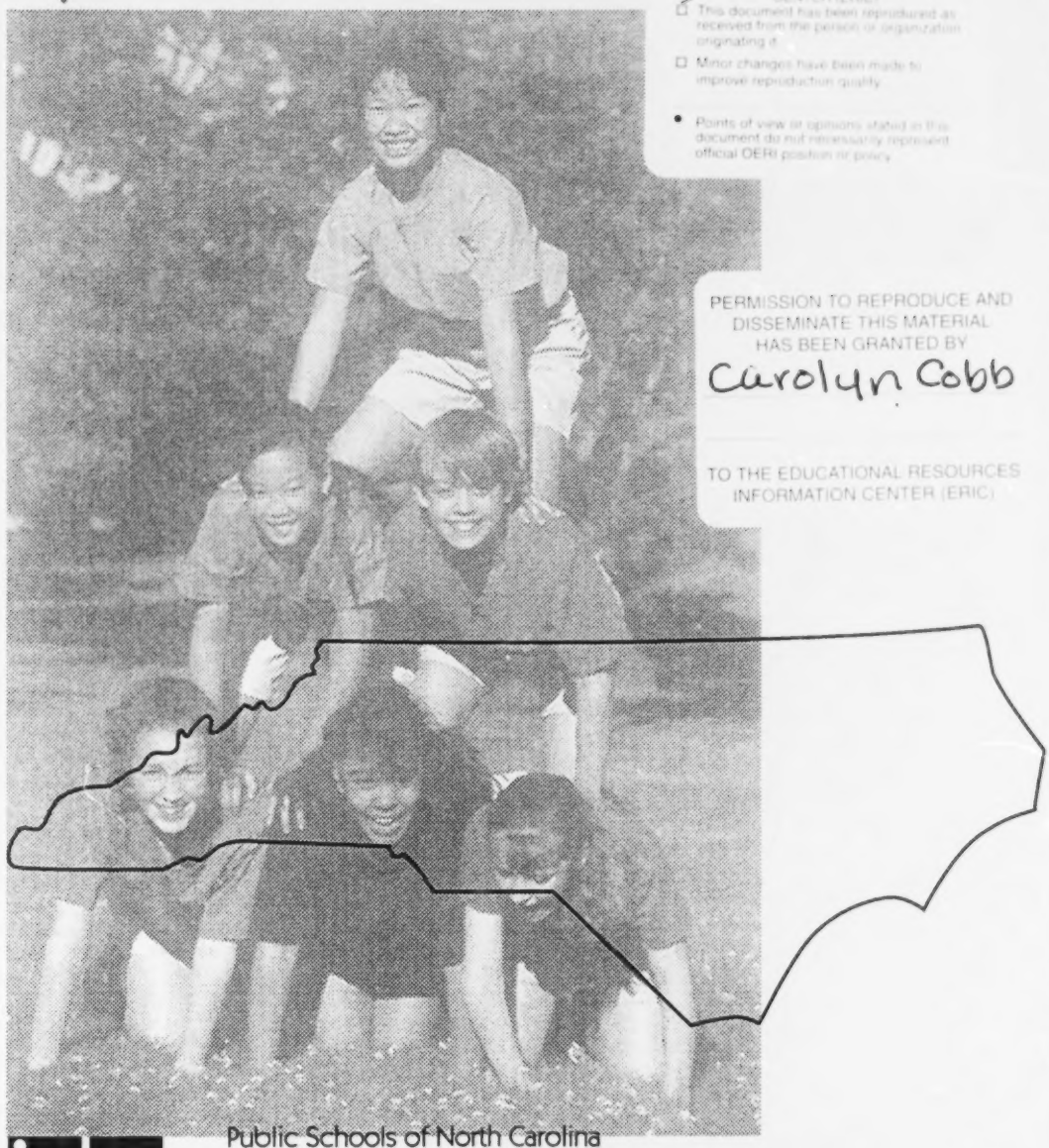

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ALTERNATIVE LEARNING PROGRAMS EVALUATION: PART II REPORT

OUTCOMES

APRIL 1997

Evaluation Report
Parts II and III
Alternative Learning Programs
1995-96

Executive Summary

Background

Evaluation Reports

The ALP evaluation is in the second of a five-year statewide evaluation process. Part I of the ALP 1995-96 Evaluation Report, presented in December 1996, focused on descriptive information about ALPs. This report, includes Parts II and III and focuses on student outcome data and recommendations about how programs can be improved.

The Part II Report describes selected outcomes for students who participated in ALPs during 1995-96. These outcomes include performance on NC End-of-Grade Tests; performance on Algebra 1, English 1, and Biology End-of-Course Tests; and dropout information.

The Part III Report contains in-depth case studies of four ALPs during the 1996-97 school year: one at the middle school level; two at the high school level; and one elementary program. These ALPs were selected to represent different types of programs in the state. Case studies were conducted to add more depth and human dimensions to the evaluation, to better understand how these programs work, and to identify what is needed for improvement.

Scope of Evaluation

Evaluation Questions

Based on the legislative intent and purposes of the evaluation, six broad evaluation questions are specified:

1. Where are the ALPs located across the state?
2. What are the types of ALPs?
3. Which students are served by these students?
4. How are program funds used?
5. What is the impact of the ALPs?
6. How can ALPs be improved?

The first four evaluation questions were the focus of the Part I Report previously published. The Part II Report of student

outcomes will address evaluation question 5. The Part III Report of ALP case studies will address all evaluations to a degree, but will focus in particular on evaluation question 6.

Characteristics of Students

Ethnic and Gender Composition

As reported in the Part I Report, demographic data collected during NC End-of-Grade Testing for grades 3 - 8 shows that the overall student population in ALPs does not reflect the ethnic and gender composition of the state. There are fewer White students and more Black students, fewer females and more males in the ALP student population than in the general student population.

At-Risk Indicators

ALP students as a group exhibit more at-risk characteristics than the general student population in the state. Parents of ALP students had less education than parents in the general student population. ALP students were absent more and the dropout rate for ALP students in grades 7 - 12 is about four times higher than in the general student population for the state.

Student Dropout Rates

The trend for ALP dropout rates in grades 9 - 12 is similar to the trend for state dropout rates for those grade levels, only the ALP dropout rates are much higher. For both the state and ALPs, dropout rates decrease with each consecutive grade level from the ninth through the twelfth grades. The highest dropout rate for both the state and ALPs is at the ninth grade level. However, the dropout rate for ALP ninth graders is about five times higher than that of the state. It is not known whether these students dropped out of the ALPs or from their home schools.

Part II Report: Student Outcomes

NC End-of-Course (EOC) Tests

Three high school end-of-course tests were analyzed for this report: Algebra 1, English I, and Biology. Only about ten percent of ALP students were proficient in these three EOC tests compared to about forty to fifty percent of the general student population in the state. However, patterns of proficiency by ethnic/gender groups varied across the three tests. In general more males, Black and White, were proficient on Algebra 1 than females. On the English I and Biology EOC tests, more White students, males and females, were proficient than Black students. Black females outperformed Black males on English I , were comparable to Black males on the Biology EOC test, and fell significantly below the proficiency level of Black males on Algebra I.

NC End-of-Grade (EOG) Tests (grades 3-8)

For both Reading and Mathematics End-of-Grade Tests, ALP students performed well below the overall student population. State proficiency rates were around 70 percent while ALP proficiency rates ranged from 18 to 42 percent, depending on subject and grade. Relative to the general student population, fifth grade ALP students performed better than ALP students in other grade levels on the mathematics EOG test. However, this pattern did not hold for reading scores. In both subject areas, grade 7 had the lowest rate of proficiency for ALP students.

Length of Enrollment in ALP

There was generally more growth in End-of-Grade Test scores for students who had longer contact (32 weeks) with ALP programs than for students who had shorter contact (8 1/2 weeks). Differences were more pronounced in reading than mathematics; and eighth graders showed more growth in reading for longer enrollments, reversing this pattern in mathematics. While the length of the enrollment in an ALP was not controlled for purposes of this evaluation, and these results do not establish a causal relationship, these results provide some evidence that exposure to the ALPs has a positive result for ALP students.

Summary

ALP students have significant educational deficiencies that put them at risk of failure. While the ALPs might be helping students improve their academic performance, they are also dealing with significant behavioral problems that take time away from academic instruction. These data also suggest intervention early is likely to be most successful. Otherwise, ALP students start out behind and never catch up.

Part III Report: Case Studies

Purpose

State level test data look at the impact of ALPs on students' success at the broadest level. This data does not address student attitudes, improved behavior, better problem-solving, or more commitment to school. The case studies were designed to look at these issues, as well as to obtain a more in-depth description about types of programs, student needs, and areas of needed improvement.

Common Findings Across Case Study Sites

- ALP staff combine caring with high expectations and determine program effectiveness by the success of individual students.
- Most regular schools do not maintain connections with students or a sense of responsibility for them once they enroll in ALPs, and many students consider regular schools an aversive setting.

- Many ALPs are viewed as "dumping grounds" or "junior jails."
- Many staff have little formal training and ongoing support to work with ALP students.
- Facilities, materials, and budgets are inadequate.
- Different enrollment trends necessitate flexibility in shifting resources.

Summary Recommendations

Upon review of the results of the Part II Student Outcomes Study and the Part III Case Studies of ALPs, following is a summary of the recommendations for improvement:

- Hire competent, caring staff who can balance structure, high expectations, and flexibility for these students. Staff need to be supported with improved, ongoing staff development.
- Create better connections between ALPs and home schools, especially better transitions in and out of ALPs. It is especially difficult for students to transition from small ALPs back into large regular schools and still maintain their progress without strong support. Some students would benefit from a change of schools after exiting the ALP so as not to slip back into old habits and patterns with peer groups that are not constructive. Currently, some local school board policies make these needed school transfers difficult or impossible.
- Regular schools need to adapt in order to better meet the needs of all students. What is needed is more "hands on," experiential teaching methods, more caring, and more involvement in problem solving that may go beyond the regular bounds of school. Bringing together more community, health, and human services for out-of-school problems that are barriers to school success is also needed.
- Establish systems for tracking and evaluating student progress. Even longitudinal tracking of simple outcomes for ALP students would be informative, such as grades, achievement scores, graduation rates, and disciplinary actions.
- Improve facilities, resources, and curriculum. Funding decisions in these areas are made by local districts and not the state. ALPs are frequently assigned to "left-over" facilities and must scrounge for funds to buy updated equipment, materials, and supplies. These problems contribute to the image problems of ALPs and also contribute to the unintended message that alternative schools are not important and that the students there are not valued. Perhaps some contribution of resources from regular schools prorated by the number of students and length of stay in ALPs would help improve program quality and shared accountability for ALP students.
- Find ways to fund ALPs that address shifts in peak enrollment periods. ALPs need to maintain their small class size in order to fulfill their purpose of individualized and personalized education. Otherwise, they risk becoming holding tanks for students.

- ALP students need something different and although there is no one best way, three characteristics are important to effectiveness: small class size, an individualized and experiential teaching format, and a caring faculty with high expectations for student success.
- Most ALP students , for a variety of reasons, have serious odds against their doing well in school. For the most part, they start out behind academically and never catch up. What is needed is more focus on prevention and early intervention as well as bringing together support services (school-linked or school-based) for out-of-school problems that have an impact on students' learning.
- Length of enrollment in an ALP is an important factor, but so is the quality of the educational experience while the student is enrolled. Many ALPs are struggling for enough resources to do a barely adequate job with these students. In addition to adequate funding, regular schools must find ways to share resources, responsibility, and accountability for these students.

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• Introduction

ALP Evaluation Reports

The Alternative Learning Program (ALP) Evaluation Report for 1996-97 is divided into three documents. The Part I Report (November, 1996) provided descriptive data about the ALPs from the 1995-96 school year, including how the number of ALPS, where they are located, information about students served (e.g., grade level, grades repeated, reasons for participation, number of suspensions) , characteristics of teachers working in ALPs, and how funds were used. This Part II Report describes selected outcomes for students in the ALPs during the 1995-96 school year. These outcomes include characteristics of students (ethnicity, gender, parent education level, absences, dropout rates, reading for fun, and homework completed), results for ALP students on state end-of-course tests, and results for ALP students on state end-of-grade tests. Part III Report contains in-depth case studies of four ALPs during the 1996-97 school year.

Data Analysis Procedures

All of the data related to outcome measures included in this report were obtained from (a) the student answer sheets on the NC End-of-Grade (EOG) Tests for grades 3 through 8, (b) the NC End-of-Course (EOC) Tests for selected high school courses, and (c) the state-level dropout database. The lists of ALP students submitted to DPI by alternative schools and programs were matched against these three state databases. In 1995-96, end-of-course tests were administered statewide in Algebra I; Economics, Legal, and Political Systems(ELP); US History; Biology; English I; and English II. For purposes of this study, three end-of-course tests were selected for analysis: Algebra I, English I, and Biology. These courses were selected in an effort to capture a large majority of students enrolled in ALPs and to get some idea of achievement in mathematics and language arts areas.

Matching procedures are intricate. For a number of reasons, data for all students are not found in any statewide database. Careful, systematic procedures are used in order to match the maximum number of data elements possible.

EOG Matching. Typically, about 50 percent of students can be "matched." The inability to match 100 percent of students is due to the lack of a unique identifier for each student in all databases. We were able to match 48 percent of the ALP student names in grades 3 - 8 against the EOG Test database for 1996. Some of the analyses also required calculating expected growth on reading and mathematics scores from 1995 to 1996. That calculation requires that students found in the 1996 EOG database also be located in the 1995 EOG database. Approximately 31 percent of all ALP students in grades 3 - 8 were found in the databases for both years. Even though all ALP students were not found, the

percentage of students with a full set of matched data for 1996 is sufficient to assume the data for ALP students reported in this outcome study is indicative of the entire ALP student population in the state. More caution is necessary for expected growth measures requiring matched students in both 1995 and 1996 databases.

Grade	Total in ALP Sample	Matched to 96 EOG	Match 96 to 95 EOG
3	60	36	2
4	74	45	43
5	60	40	29
6	394	241	167
7	1040	565	366
8	1738	690	422
TOTAL	3366	1617	1029

*Not all matches resulted in usable data. Some of the matches were for records with no score.

EOC Matching. The matching process for End-of-Course tests has yet another complication. Every student enrolled in Algebra I, English I, and/or Biology should have been administered those respective End-of-Course tests. However, there is no master list indicating which ALP students were enrolled in Algebra I, English I or Biology. Therefore, when a given ALP student is not located in the End-of-Course database, it is impossible to know whether the reason for the missing test score is (a) the student did not take the End-of-Course test because he or she was not enrolled in the subject, (b) the student was absent for an extended period and missed the test, (c) the student was officially excluded from the test because of a handicapping condition, (d) or the student missed the test for other reasons (e.g., invalid test administration, improper exclusion). Since the total number of students that should have been tested is not known (the denominator), it is impossible to calculate the precise percentage of ALP students matched against the 1996 statewide EOC database. As with EOG tests, the number of ALP students matched with their respective EOC test scores likely underestimates that actual number of ALP students enrolled in these two subjects. However, the number matched should be large enough to be considered indicative of the results for all ALPs on these tests.

Course	Number ALP Students
Algebra I	732
English I	1064
Biology	974

Dropout Matching. The 1995-96 school year was the first year the state level dropout database was available for analysis in the ALP evaluation. Heretofore, only district data were reported to the state. Last year, dropout data was compiled by schools, aggregated at the school district level, and submitted to the state in electronic form. The

dropout database was used to determine the number of ALP students who dropped out of school (either the ALP or their home school) after the 1995-96 year. No student names are included in the dropout database. Instead, each student is assigned a unique identifying number (for the dropout database only). The unique identifying number is either a social security number, if provided by the student, or a SIMS ID number. The Student Data Form database for ALP students also contains at least one of the two identification numbers for most students. In examining dropout rates, the ALP Student Data Form database was matched against the state dropout database. Again, the matching system is not foolproof. One cannot always assume that because an ALP student is not identified in the dropout database that the student is still enrolled in school. Some ALP students cannot be matched in the dropout database for other reasons (e.g., no unique identification number, the student moved and was assigned a different identification number, accurate records were not kept). The information provided is likely a conservative estimate of the actual ALP dropout rates, but it does provide an estimate of dropout patterns for ALP students compared to the general student population.

• Student Characteristics

Ethnicity

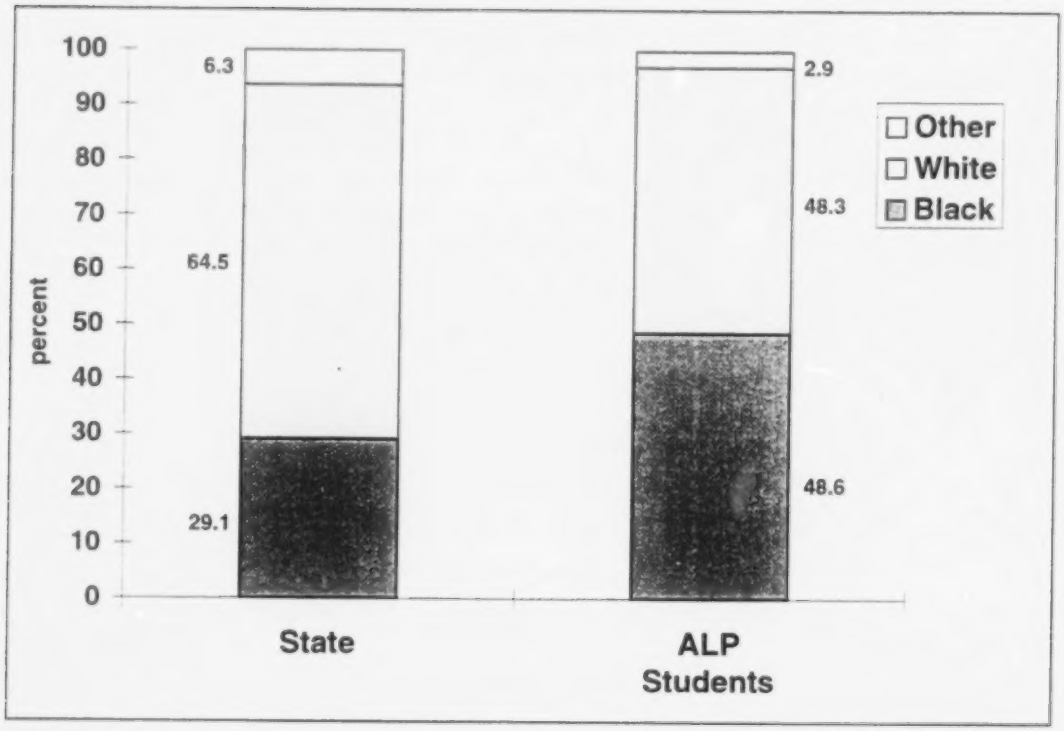

Figure 1. Ethnic composition of students (grade 3 - 8) taking EOG tests for state and ALPs

- There are more black students in the Alternative Learning Programs (49.5%) than in the general student population (30%).
- The Alternative Learning Programs are evenly composed of white and black students.
- The Alternative Learning Programs had a lower proportion of students who were neither black nor white than the general student population.

Gender

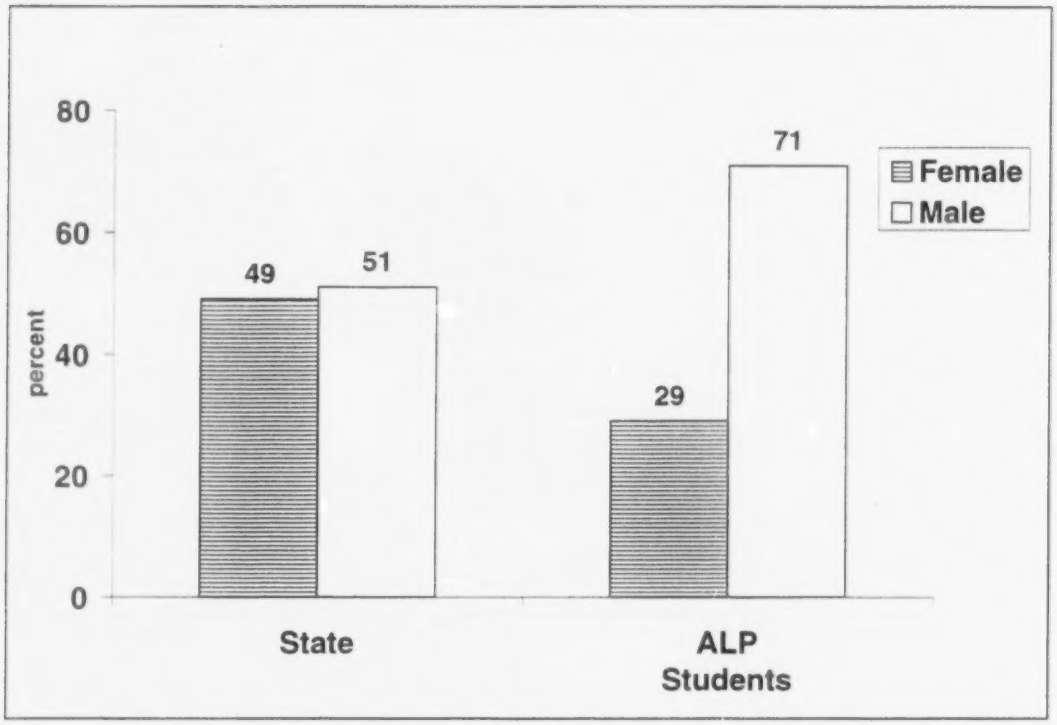

Figure 2. Gender of students (grades 3 - 8) taking EOG tests for state and ALPs

- There are more male students (grades 3 - 8) in alternative learning programs (71%) than there are in the general student population (51%) for the state.
- Students in the general student population for the state are about half male and half female. In the Alternative Learning Programs, about three quarters of the students are male.

Absences

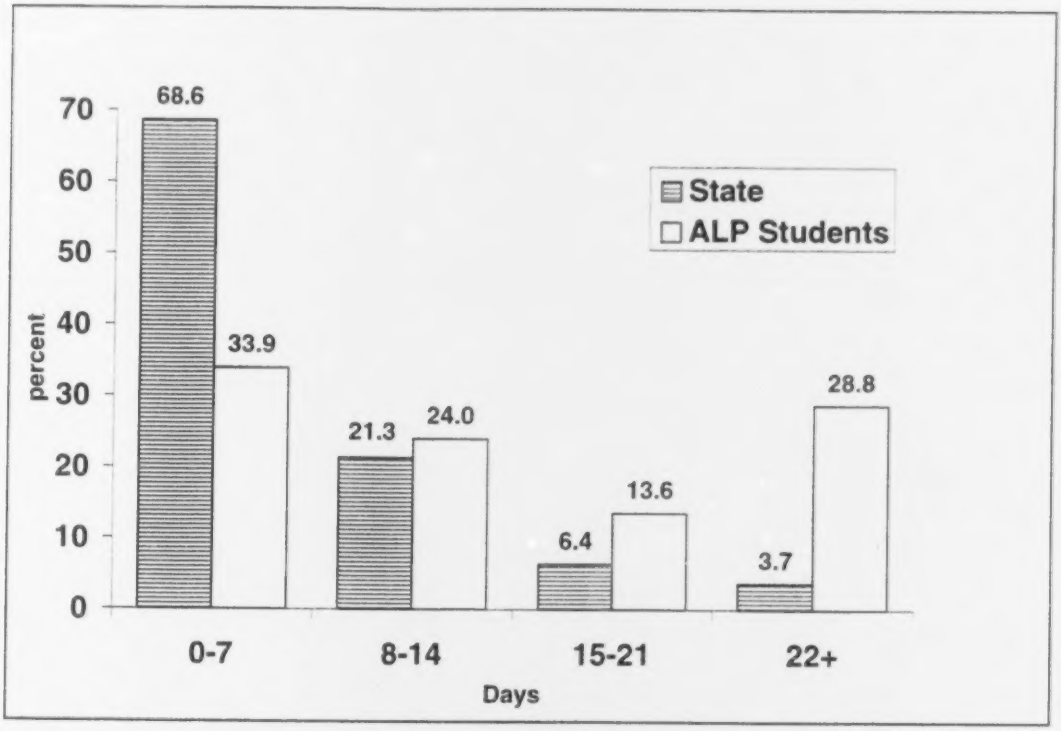

Figure 3. Days absent for ALP and state students taking EOG tests (grades 3 - 8)

- ALP students (grades 3 - 8) were absent much more frequently than students (grades 3 - 8) in the general population.

- The majority (69%) of students in the general population (taking the EOG test) had seven or fewer absences in the school year. This compares to barely one third (33.9%) of Alternative Learning Program students who had that few absences.

- Almost 30 percent of Alternative Learning Program students had twenty-two or more absences in the school year. This compares to only 3.7 percent of students in the general population with that many absences.

Dropout Rate

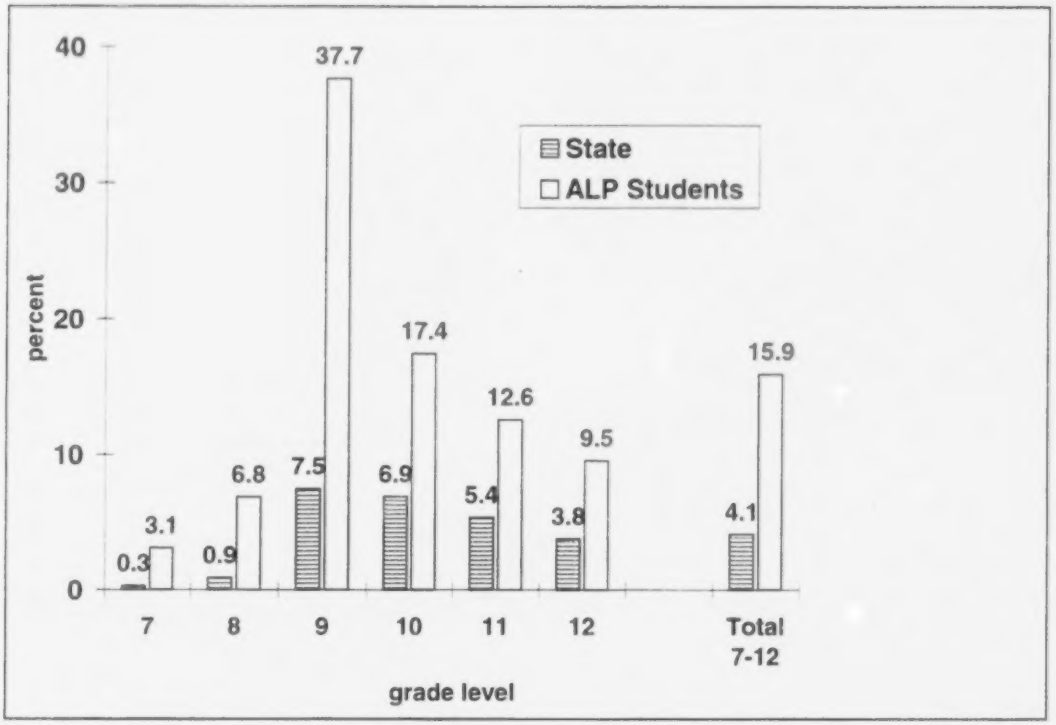

Figure 4. Dropout rates (95-96) for state and ALP students by grade level (Federal Duplicate Rate)

- The dropout rate in grades 7 - 12 for ALP students is about four times higher (16%) than in the general student population (4%) for the state.

- The highest dropout rate for ALP students occurred in grade 9 where more than one third (37.7%) of the students who had been enrolled in an Alternative Learning Program dropped out of school. In any given case it is not known whether the student dropped out of the ALP or the home school.

- For students who had been enrolled in an Alternative Learning Program, dropout rates decrease at each grade level from the ninth through the twelfth grade. This pattern also holds for all students, although at much lower rates. It would appear that those who make it past that critical year (9th grade) are more likely to stay in school, although still at a considerably lower rate than other students.

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Parent Educational Level

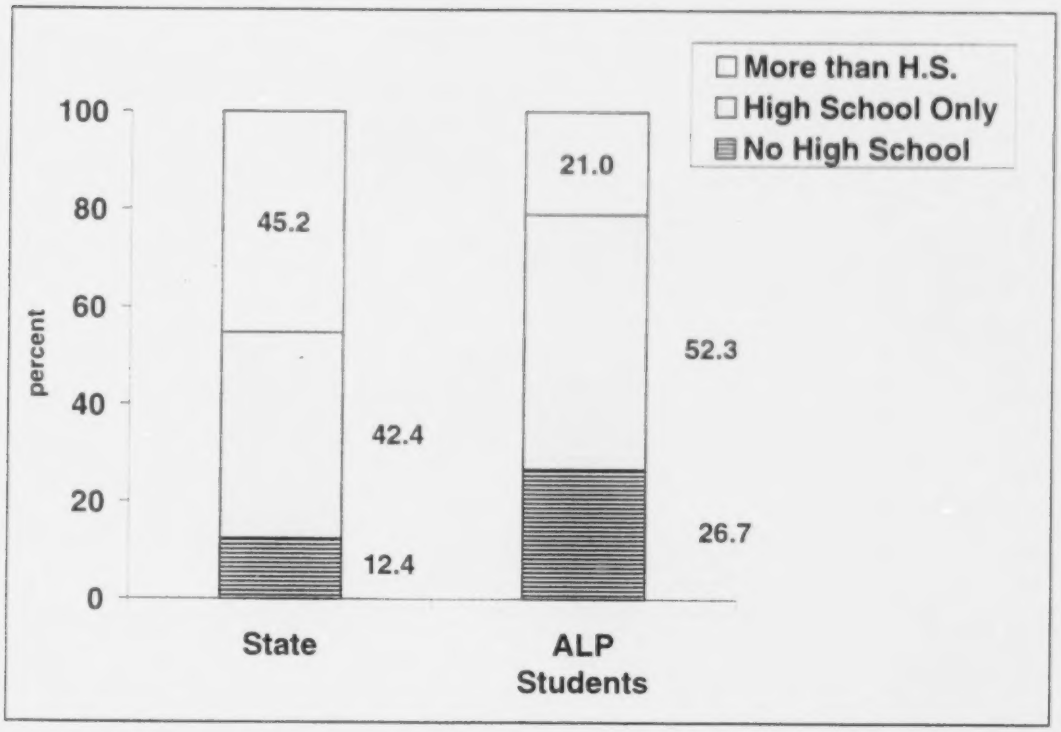

Figure 5. Parent education levels for students (grade 3 - 8) taking EOG tests in the state and ALPs

- Parents of Alternative Learning Program students had less education than parents of students in the general population. The biggest gaps between parents of ALP versus all students were in two categories: no High School degree, 'post High School degrees.

- More than one in four (27%) parents of ALP students lacked a high school diploma compared to 12 percent of the student population (grades 3 - 8) in the state.

- In the general student population, about 55 percent of the students had parents who had a high school diploma or less. Alternative Learning Program students reported that 79 percent of their parents had a high school diploma or less.

- Close to half (45%) of parents of students in the general population had post-high school education. About one in five (21%) of parents of students in Alternative Learning Programs had post-high school education.

Reading for Fun

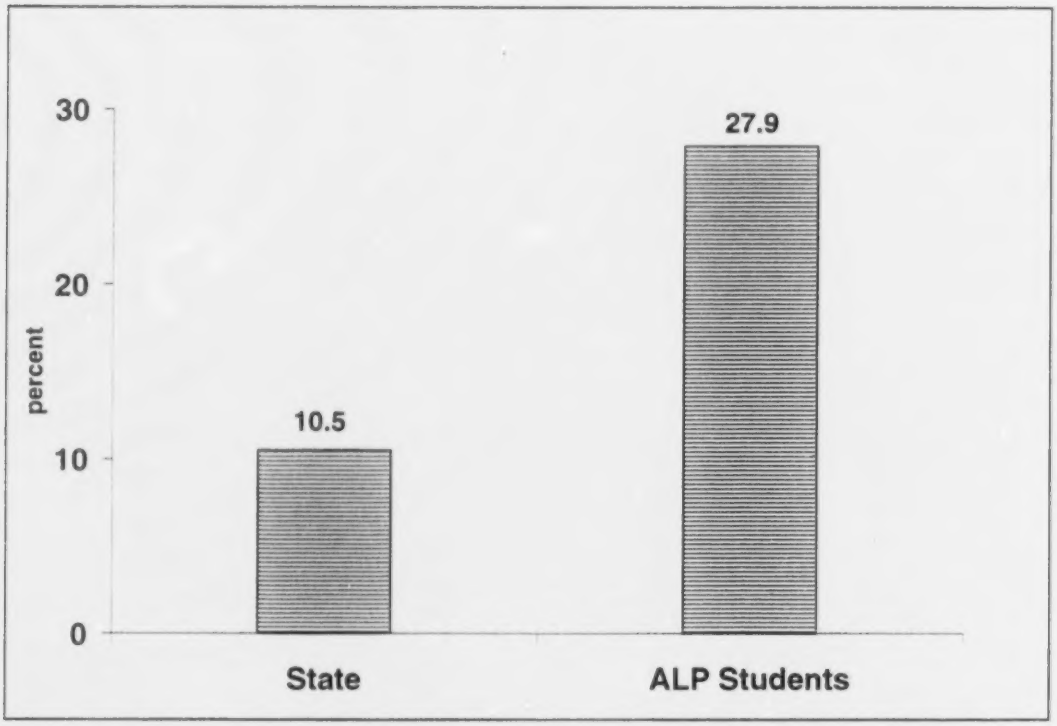

Figure 6. Students taking EOG tests (grades 3 - 8) who NEVER read for fun, for state and ALPs

- Students (grades 3 - 8) in Alternative Learning Programs read for fun less often than students in the general population.

- Students (grades 3 - 8) in Alternative Learning Programs report that they NEVER read for fun at a rate which is approximately three times that of students in the general population.

Homework

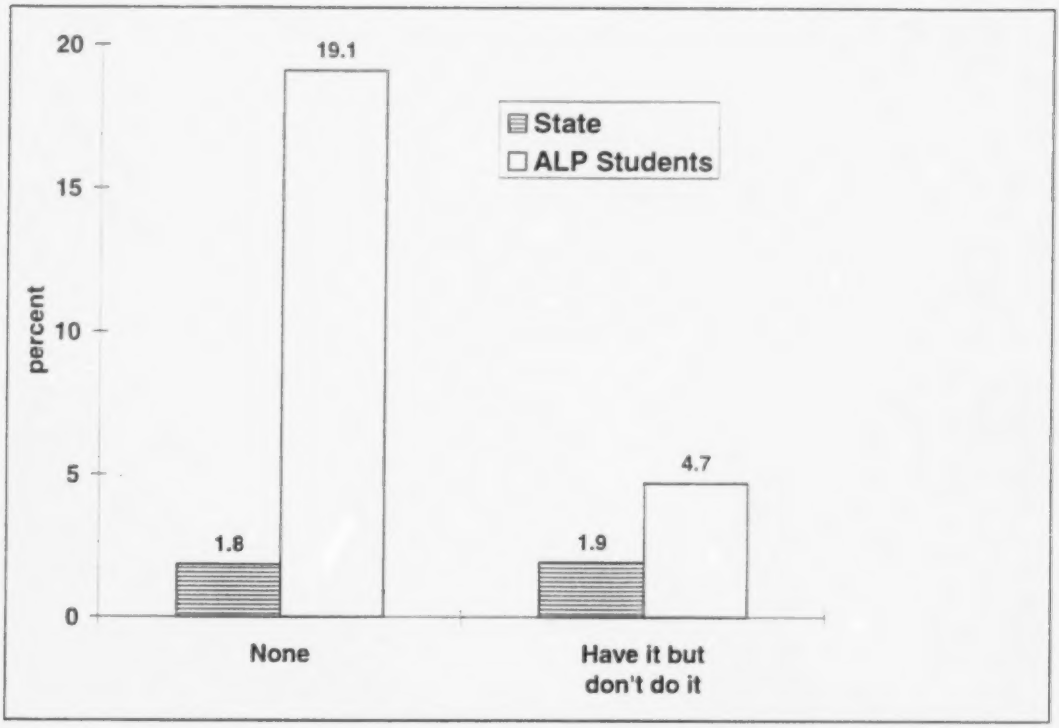

Figure 7. Students taking EOG tests (grade 3 - 8) who have NO homework, or do not do assigned homework, for state and ALPs

- About one in five (19%) of students (grades 3 - 8) in Alternative Learning Programs report having no homework. Having no homework is a rare event (less than 2%) for students in the general population. Some ALPs may not assign homework due to the nature of students, as well as an effort to keep them from dropping out of school due to academic expectations which are experienced as overwhelming.

- About two-and-a-half times more students (grades 3 - 8) report not doing assigned homework (4.7%) than in the general student population of the state (1.9%).

Summary for Student Characteristics

Information found on the North Carolina EOG Tests and the state dropout data base indicates the high level of risk factors for students in the ALPs. Students in ALPs are more likely to be male and black than in the general student population. These data continue to support concern for the academic performance of these gender and ethnic groups. Also, parents of students in ALPS had less education than parents of students in the general student population. Parent education level is typically moderately associated with achievement in school.

Doing less homework and reading for fun less frequently than all students are other indicators of higher academic risk for ALP students. Clearly, the ALPs are serving high risk populations.

• END-OF-COURSE TEST RESULTS

Algebra I EOC Proficiency

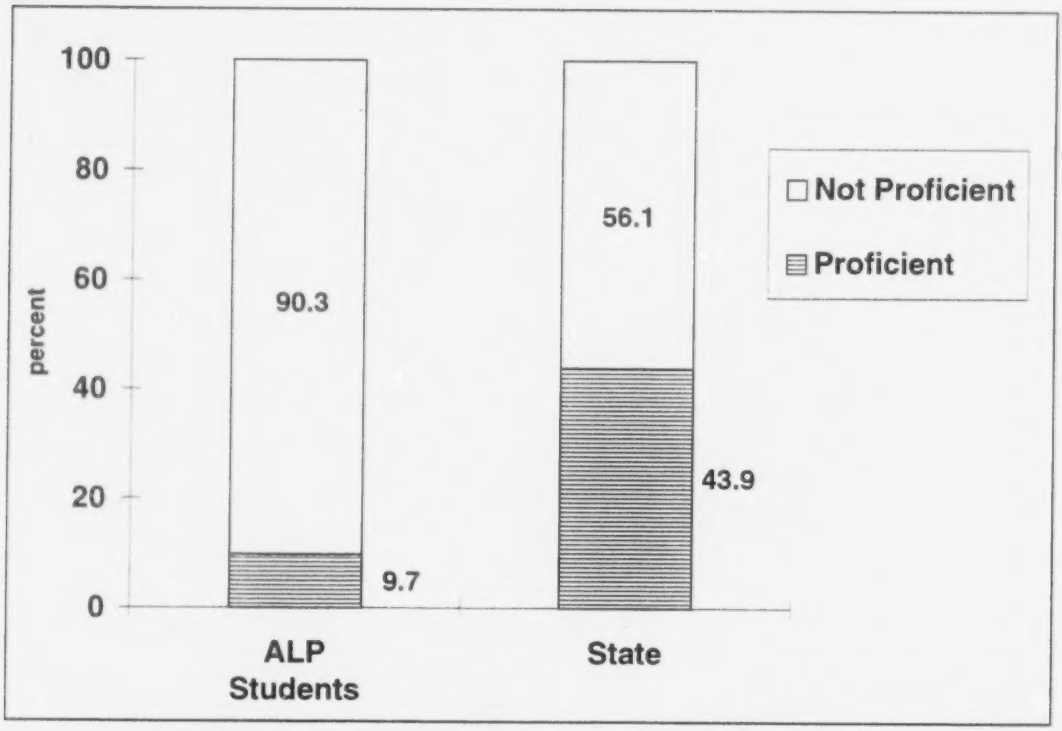

Figure 8. Students scoring "Proficient" on Algebra I End-of-Course Test, for ALP students and general student population

- The proficiency rate for ALP students on the Algebra I EOC (1996) is considerably below the state proficiency rate.

- ALP students taking the Algebra I EOC Test (1996) scored at or above the proficiency level about ten percent of the time, compared to 44 percent of the general student population.

NOTE: Proficiency on EOC tests is a standard used to describe the level of mastery is the subject area. "Proficient" corresponds to students receiving A's and B's in the course, as judged by teachers at the time of the first test administration and linked to subsequent student performance on the tests.

Algebra I EOC Proficiency: by Ethnicity and Gender

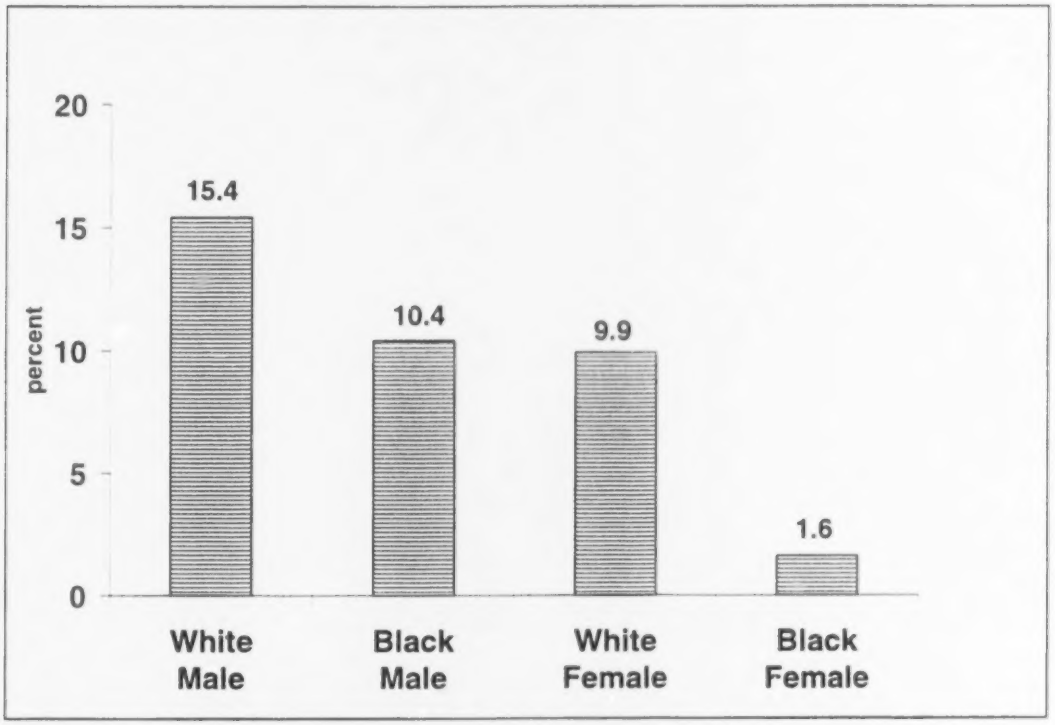

Figure 9. Percent of ALP students scoring "Proficient" on Algebra I End-of-Course Test, by ethnicity and gender

- Proficiency across all ethnic-by-gender groups is low compared to the general student population, but the variation across groups differs markedly.

- White males scored at or above the proficient level on the Algebra I EOC Test (1996) just over fifteen percent of the time. Their performance was followed by black males and white females scoring at or above proficiency approximately ten percent of the time. Black females scored at "proficient" or above less than two percent of the time.

NOTE: Proficiency on EOC tests is a standard used to describe the level of mastery is the subject area. "Proficient" corresponds to students receiving A's and B's in the course, as judged by teachers at the time of the first test administration and linked to subsequent student performance on the tests.

English I EOC Proficiency

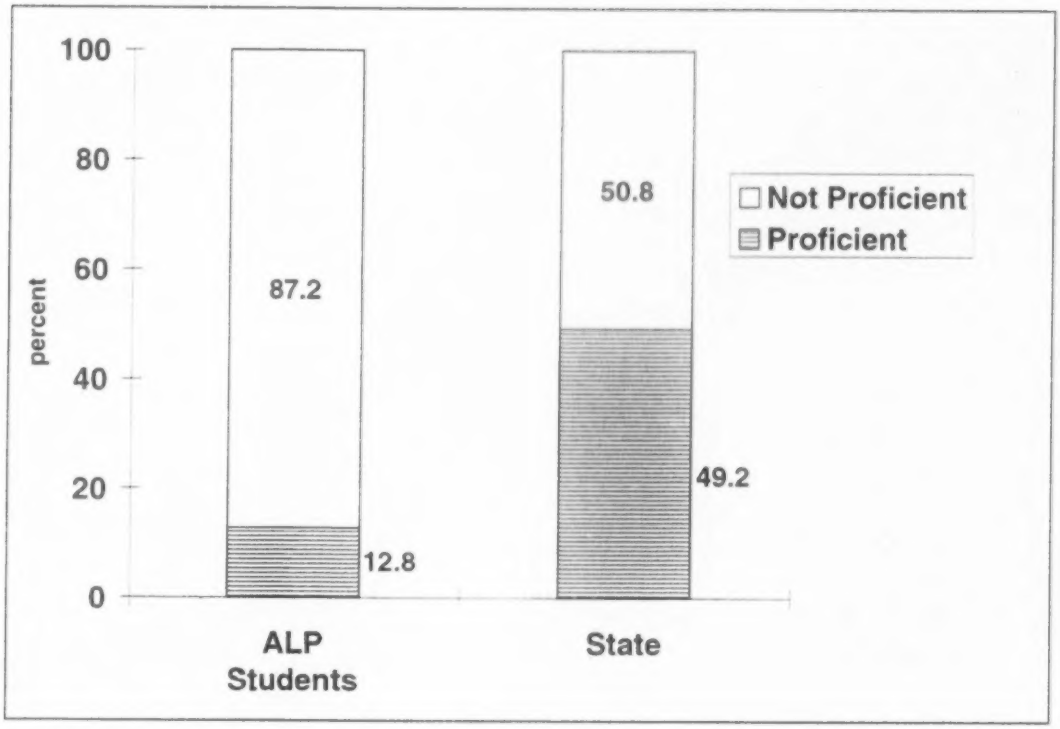

Figure 10. Percent of students scoring "Proficient" on English I End-of-Course Test, by ALP and general student population

- The proficiency rate for ALP students on the English I EOC Test (1996) is considerably below the proficiency rate of the general student population.
- About one in eight ALP students taking the English I EOC Test (1996) scored at or above the proficient level, compared to one of every two for the general student population.

NOTE: Proficiency on EOC tests is a standard used to describe the level of mastery is the subject area. "Proficient" corresponds to students receiving A's and B's in the course, as judged by teachers at the time of the first test administration and linked to subsequent student performance on the tests.

English I EOC Proficiency: by Ethnicity and Gender

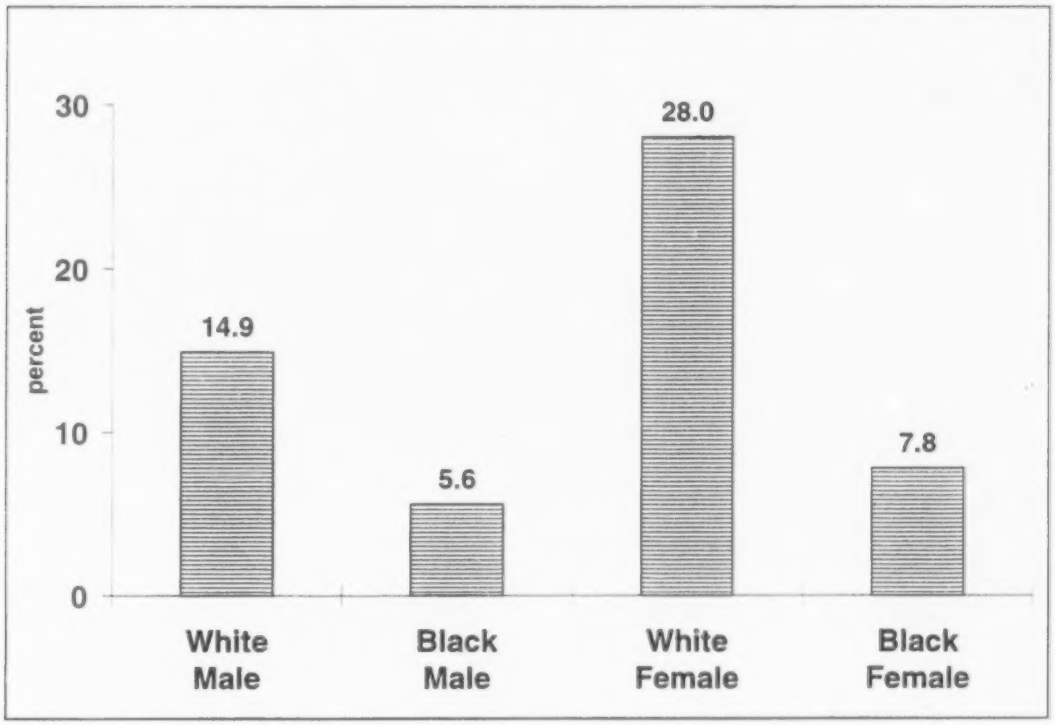

Figure 11. Percent of ALP students scoring "Proficient" on English I End-of-Course Test, by ethnicity and gender

- The pattern of proficiency across ethnic-by-gender groups for ALP students varies widely.

- White females scored at or above the proficient level more than one quarter (28%) of the time. This rate was followed by white males who scored proficient or higher at about half the rate (15%) of white females. Black females scored at or above proficient 7.8 percent of the time, which is about one-quarter the rate for white females. Black males scored at or above proficient 5.6 percent of the time, about one-third the rate for white males.

NOTE: Proficiency on EOC tests is a standard used to describe the level of mastery is the subject area. "Proficient" corresponds to students receiving A's and B's in the course, as judged by teachers at the time of the first test administration and linked to subsequent student performance on the tests.

Biology EOC Proficiency

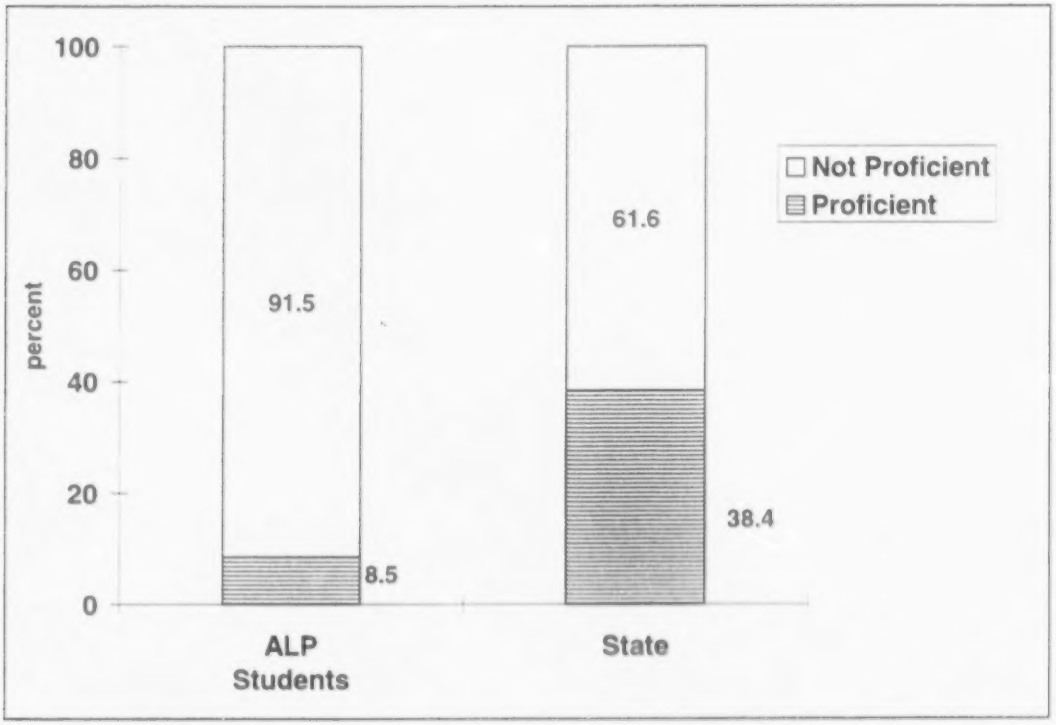

Figure 12. Percent of students scoring "Proficient" on Biology I End-of-Course Test, by ALP and general student population

- The proficiency rate for ALP students on the Biology EOC Test (1996) is considerably below the proficiency rate of the general student population.
- About one in twelve ALP students taking the Biology EOC Test (1996) scored at or above the proficient level, compared to one of every three for the general student population.
- While the ALP students are least proficient in Biology of all three subjects, the same is true for students statewide.

NOTE: Proficiency on EOC tests is a standard used to describe the level of mastery is the subject area. "Proficient" corresponds to students receiving A's and B's in the course, as judged by teachers at the time of the first test administration and linked to subsequent student performance on the tests.

Biology EOC Proficiency: by Ethnicity and Gender

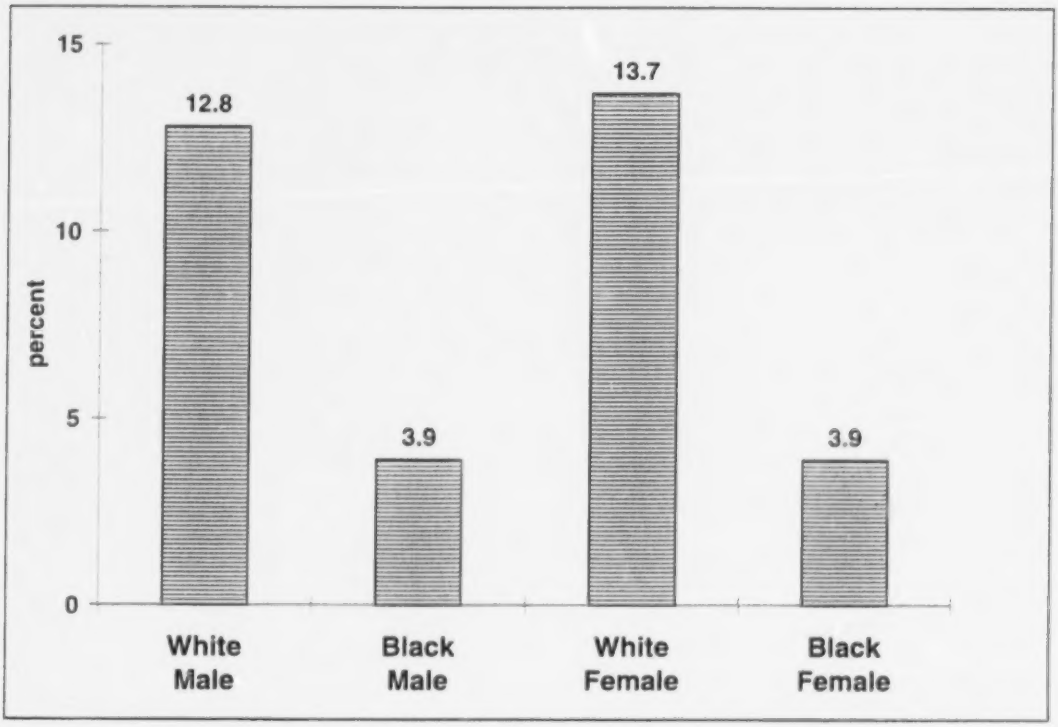

Figure 13. Percent of ALP students scoring "Proficient" on Biology End-of-Course Test, by ethnicity and gender

- The pattern of proficiency across ethnic-by-gender groups for ALP students varies widely.
- About one in eight White males and females enrolled in an ALP scored at or above the proficiency level in Biology. About one in twenty five Black males and females enrolled in an ALP scored at or above the proficiency level.

NOTE: Proficiency on EOC tests is a standard used to describe the level of mastery is the subject area. "Proficient" corresponds to students receiving A's and B's in the course, as judged by teachers at the time of the first test administration and linked to subsequent student performance on the tests.

Summary for End-of-Course Tests

In Algebra I, English I, and Biology, courses required for graduation from high school, ALP students performed well below the overall student population. For Algebra I and English I, proficiency was around 10 percent, about one-fourth the proficiency rate for all students. Males, both white and black, had the highest proficiency rates among ALP students for Algebra I. However, white students, both female and male, had the highest proficiency rates among ALP students for English I.

In the End-of-Course Test for Biology, ALP students performed well below the overall student population. Proficiency was about 9 percent, less than one-fourth the proficiency for all students who took the test. White males and females had proficiency rates slightly above 10 percent, while black males and females had proficiency rates below 4 percent.

• End-of-Grade Test Scores

Introduction To End-of-Grade Tests

Each student in grades three through eight is expected to take the reading and mathematics End-of-Grade Tests at the end of the school year. Only certain handicapped students whose IEPs so specify and Limited English Proficient Students (in the first two years) are exempted from these tests.

Results on the tests are reported in developmental scale scores, ranging from a low of approximately 100 to a high of approximately 200 across all grades. Statewide gains in scale scores points are established from one grade level to the next. Also, grade-level proficiency is determined by the percentage of students performing at achievement levels III and IV.

In addition, the new ABC growth formula provides expectations by grade and by school for "expected growth" across grades based on where the students in the school scored the previous year. These statistical procedures result in slightly higher growth expectations for low performing schools than higher performing schools. Part of the analyses in this report (Figure 20) were based on the ABC growth formula, treating the ALP students as if they were in a single school. This procedure establishes "expected growth" for ALP students in grades 3 - 8 as if they were in a low performing school and is one attempt to provide a proxy comparison group.

The results in this section are based on Spring, 1996 EOG Tests. Where growth - actual or expected (predicted) - is reported, the difference between 1995 EOG scores and 1996 EOG scores is used. Because the number of third graders matched with usable scores was so small, third grade results cannot be reliably reported.

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Mathematics Scale Scores for ALP and State

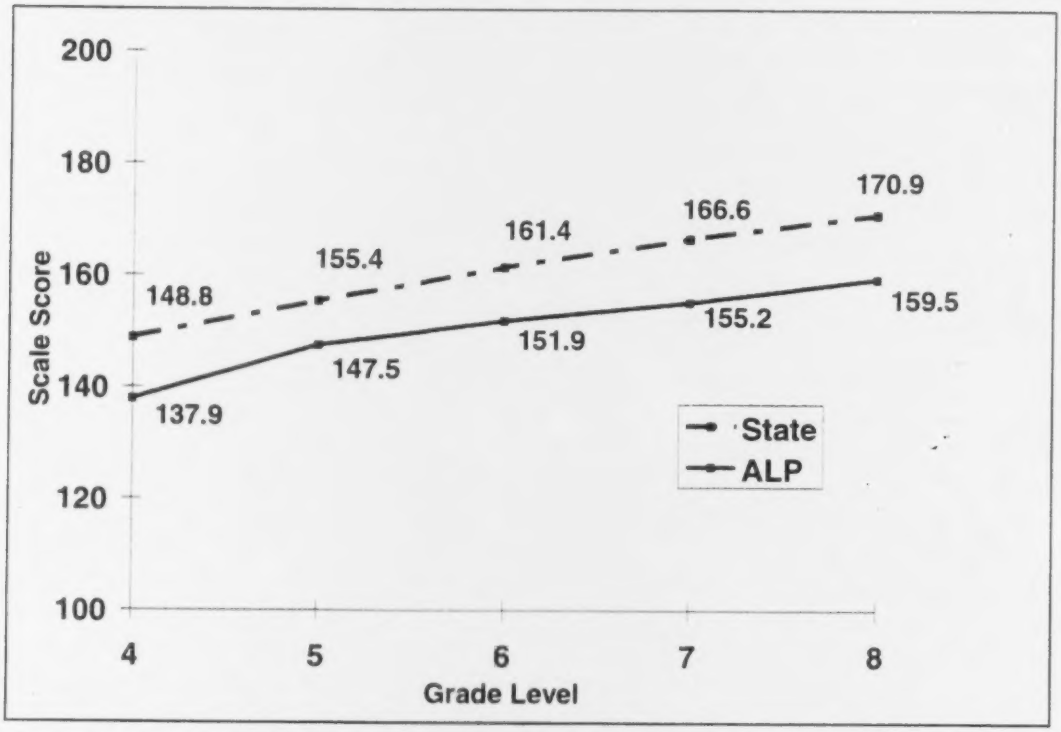

Figure 14. Average 1996 End-of-Grade scale scores for Mathematics, by grade level for ALPs and state

- Average Mathematics End-of-Grade scale scores for Alternative Learning Program students were about 10 scale score points below the state average in every grade. Thus, the pattern of growth for ALP students compared to all students in the state is consistently lower across grades.

- The pattern of mathematics achievement for ALP students is similar to that of the general student population, only it is lower. Starting out behind, ALP students never catch up.

Reading Scale Scores for ALP and State

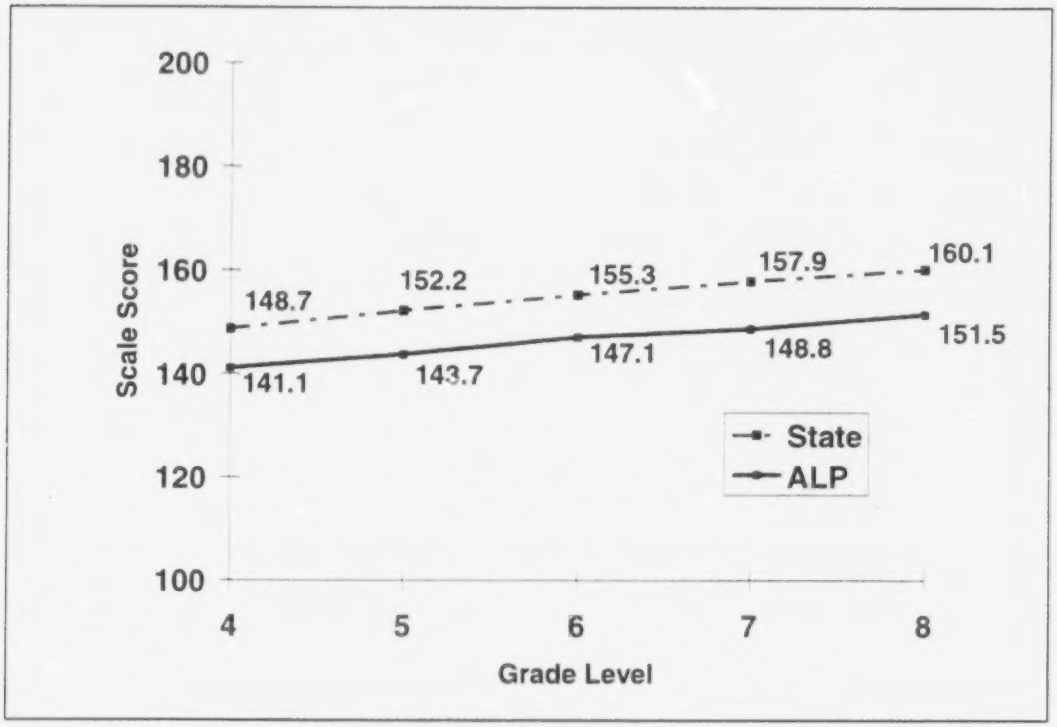

Figure 15. Average 1996 End-of-Grade scale scores for Reading, by grade level for ALPs and state

- Average Reading End-of-Grade scale scores for Alternative Learning Program students were about 9 scale score points below the state average in every grade. Thus, the pattern of growth for ALP students compared to all students in the state was consistently lower across grades.

- The pattern of mathematics achievement for ALP students is similar to that of the general student population, only it is lower. Again, starting out behind, ALP students never catch up.

Mathematics Proficiency for ALP and State

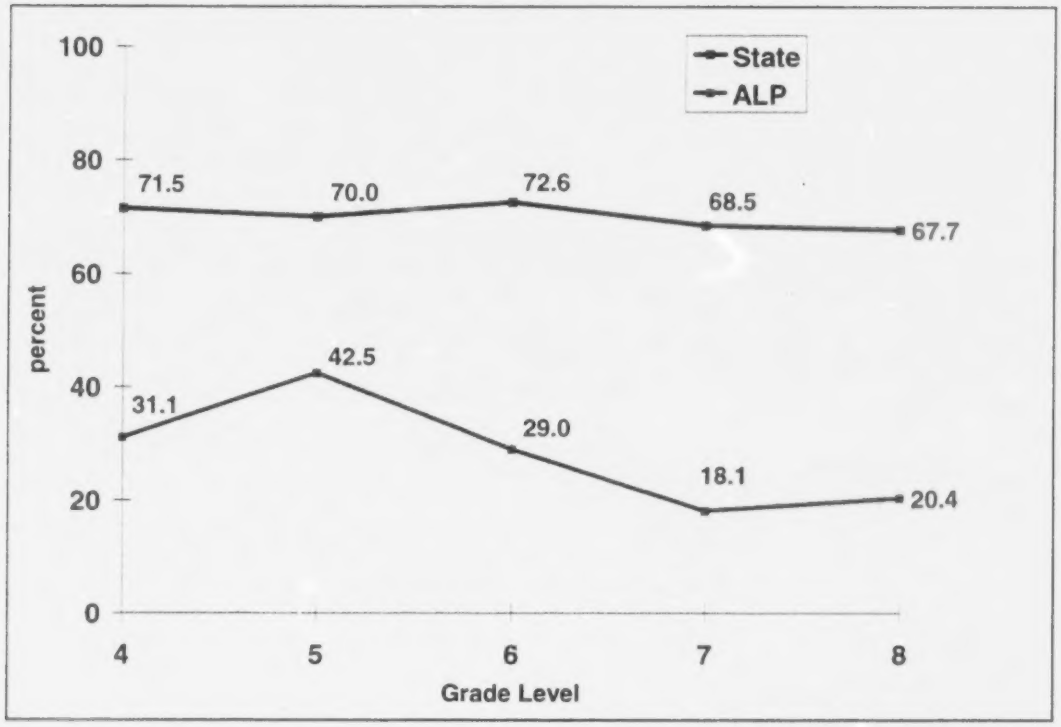

Figure 16. Percent Proficient on 1996 End-of-Grade test for Mathematics, by grade level for ALPs and state

- Students who were enrolled in an ALP during 1995-96 achieved proficiency at a lower rate on the EOG Mathematics Tests than students in the general population for the state.

- For the state as a whole, the rate of proficiency on the mathematics EOG is about 70 percent for all grades. Students who were enrolled in an ALP during 1995-96 had rates of proficiency that ranged from less than 20 percent to more than 40 percent.

- For ALP students proficiency was higher in grades 4 and 5 falling slightly at grade 6 and more sharply at grades 7 and 8.

Note: Proficiency on EOG tests measures student performance relative to standards set by teachers and linked to student performance, identifying expected levels of performance at each grade. A student is considered proficient when he or she consistently demonstrates mastery of the grade level subject matter and skills and is well prepared for the next grade level.

Reading Proficiency for ALP and State

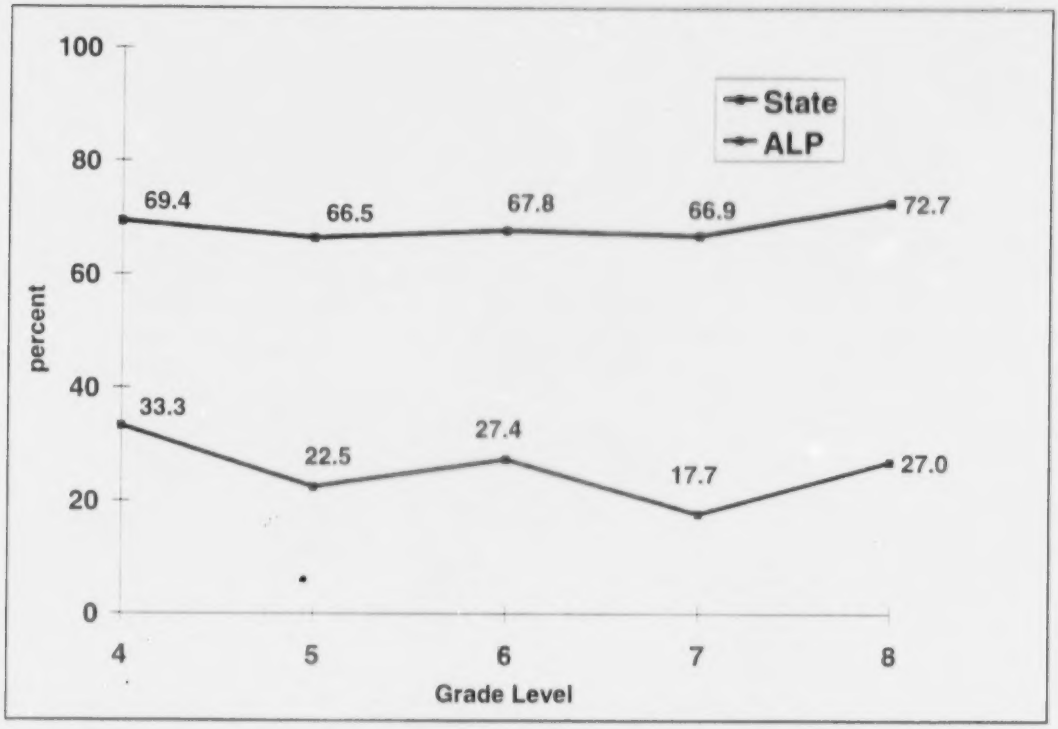

Figure 17. Percent Proficient on 1996 End-of-Grade test for Reading, by grade level for ALPs and state

- Students who were enrolled in an ALP during 1995-96 achieved proficiency at a lower rate on End-of-Grade Reading Tests than students in the general population for the state.

- For the state as a whole, the rate of proficiency on the Reading Test is about 70 percent for all grades. Students who were enrolled in an ALP during 1995-96 had rates of proficiency that ranged from less than 20 percent to more than 30 percent.

Note: Proficiency on EOG tests measures student performance relative to standards set by teachers and linked to student performance, identifying expected levels of performance at each grade. A student is considered proficient when he or she consistently demonstrates mastery of the grade level subject matter and skills and is well prepared for the next grade level.

Actual Growth in Mathematics Scores for ALPs and State

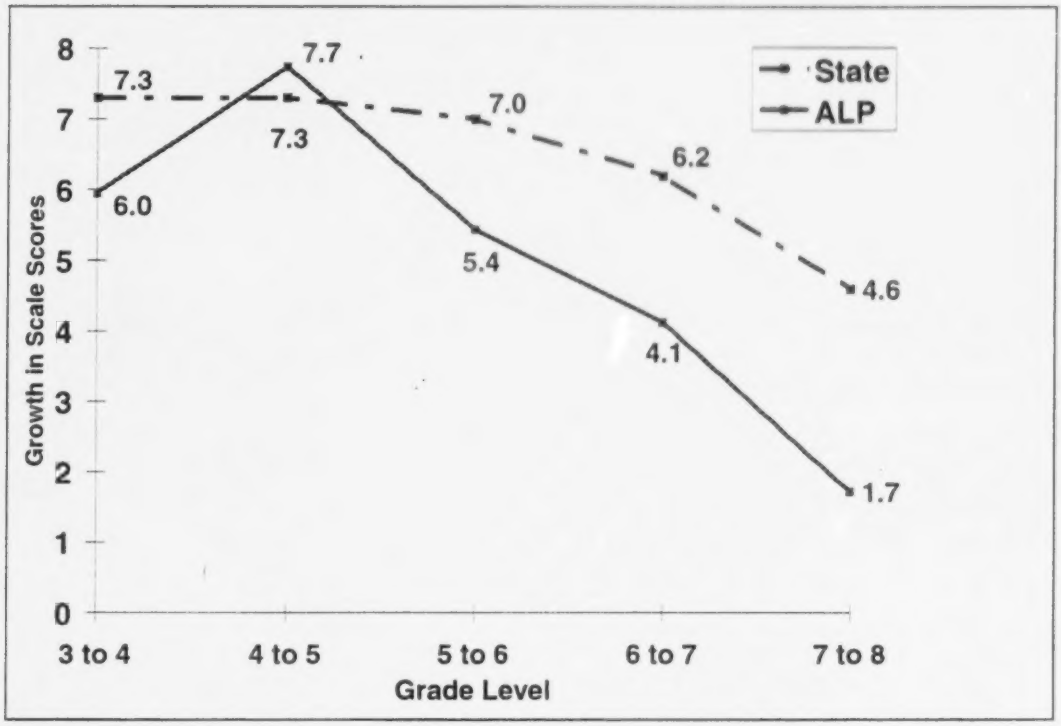

Figure 18. Actual growth in End-of-Grade scale scores for Mathematics (1995 to 1996), by grade level for ALPs and state

- The average amount of growth in Mathematics EOG scale scores from 1995 to 1996 for students enrolled in ALPs was below the average growth for the state, except for grade 5.

- The differences in the average growth for Mathematics between students enrolled in ALPs and the general student population increased progressively for grades six, seven and eight. The amount of growth for ALP students at these grade levels was well below the state average. However, average amount of growth for ALP students at grades 4 and 5 was close to the state average.

Note: Actual growth is the difference between the average scale score in 1996 and 1995 for the same students in each grade.

Actual Growth in Reading Scores for ALPs and State

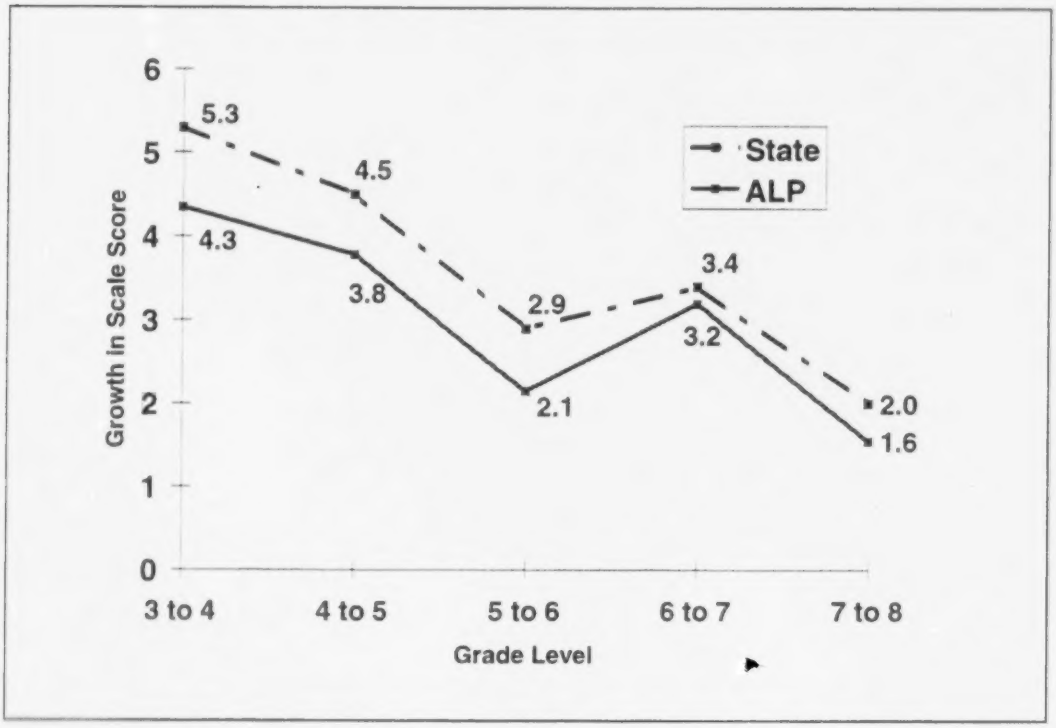

Figure 19. Actual growth in End-of-Grade scale scores for Reading (1995 to 1996), by grade level for ALPs and state

- The average growth in Reading EOG scale scores for 1995 to 1996 for students enrolled in ALPs was about one scale score point below the average growth for the state, except for grade seven. The average growth at grade 7 was similar for ALP students and all students in the state.

- The differences in average growth in Reading between students enrolled in ALPs and the general student population, unlike math, remained fairly constant across grade levels, but the gap in achievement for ALP students was not as great.

Expected Versus Actual Growth in EOG Scores from 1995 to 1996 for ALPS

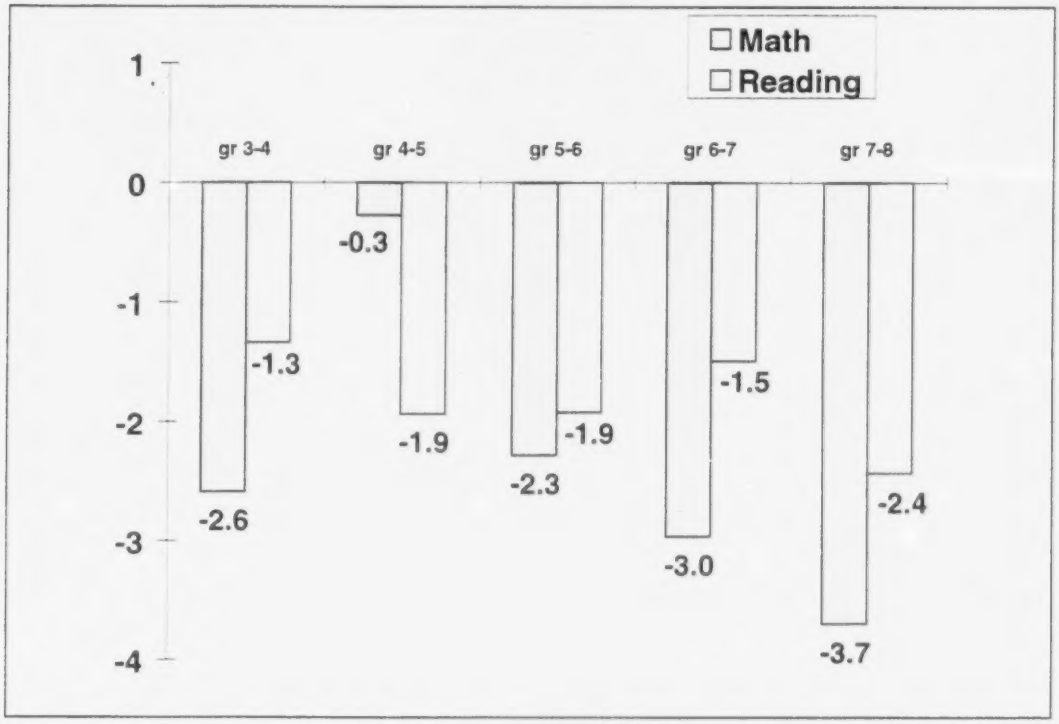

Figure 20. Actual versus expected growth in End-of-Grade scale scores for Mathematics and Reading (1995 to 1996), For ALP by grade level

- Students enrolled in ALPs during the year did not achieve their *expected* growth in either reading or mathematics as projected from the ABC Growth Formula at any grade level. However, fifth graders were very close to meeting expected growth in mathematics.

- With the exception of grade four, students enrolled in ALPs during the year increasingly fell behind their *expected* growth in mathematics at successive school grades beyond grade 5.

- The pattern for reading, as on other indicators, was different. The extent below *expected* growth varied across grade levels.

Note: This figure represents expected versus actual growth, as determined by the ABC growth formula. All ALP students at a given grade level were treated as if they were a grade level in a school in order to project *expected* growth. These numbers reflect the amount of growth, not actual scores.

In Figure 20, "0" on the vertical scale means "expected growth" was met. If the graph extends below "0," the *actual* grade-level growth was the designated number of points **below** the *expected* growth.

Length of Enrollment: Actual Growth in Mathematics Scores for Short and Long Enrollment Periods in ALPs

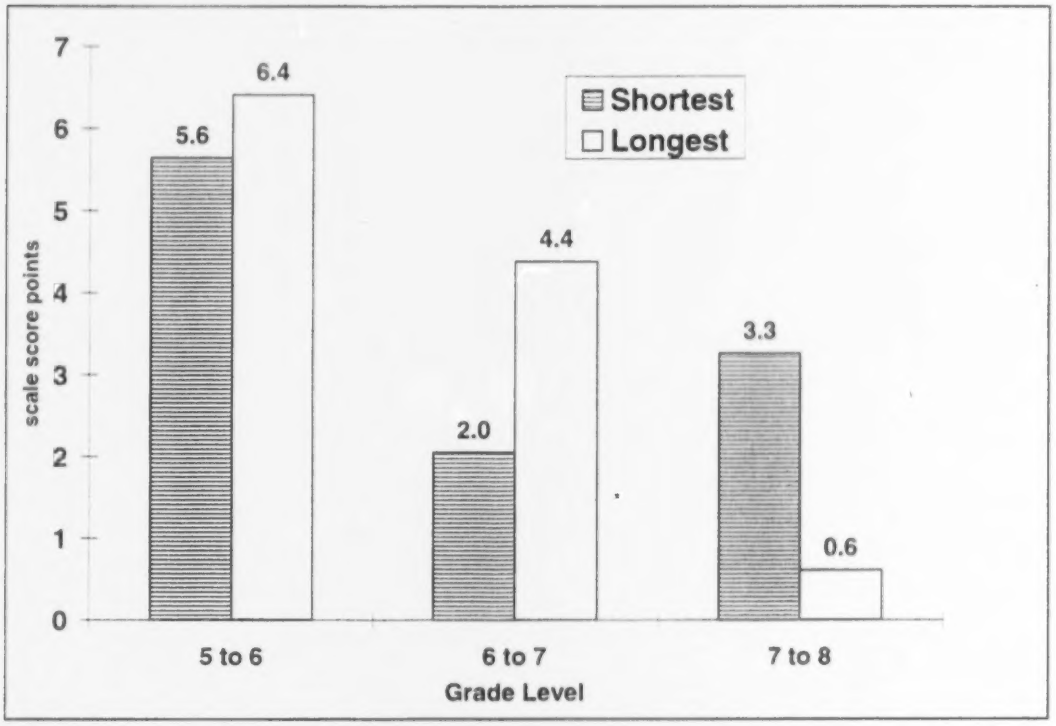

Figure 21. Actual growth in End-of-Grade Scale Scores for Mathematics (1995 to 1996), by length of enrollment and grade level

- Students who were enrolled for longer periods in ALPs in 1995-96 generally showed more growth in EOG mathematics scale scores from the previous year than those students who stayed a short time (long was more than 38 calendar weeks - or approximately one school year; short was less than 8.5 calendar weeks). This was true for sixth and seventh grade students, but not for eighth grade students.

- The difference is growth was slight at sixth grade (.8 points) and more significant at seventh grade (2.4 points).

- Eighth-grade students reversed the pattern, actually showing less growth (2.7 fewer scale score points) among students enrolled for longer than shorter periods of time.

Note: There were too few students in grades 3 - 5 to conduct these analyses.

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Length of Enrollment: Actual Growth in Reading Scores for Short and Long Enrollment Periods in ALPs

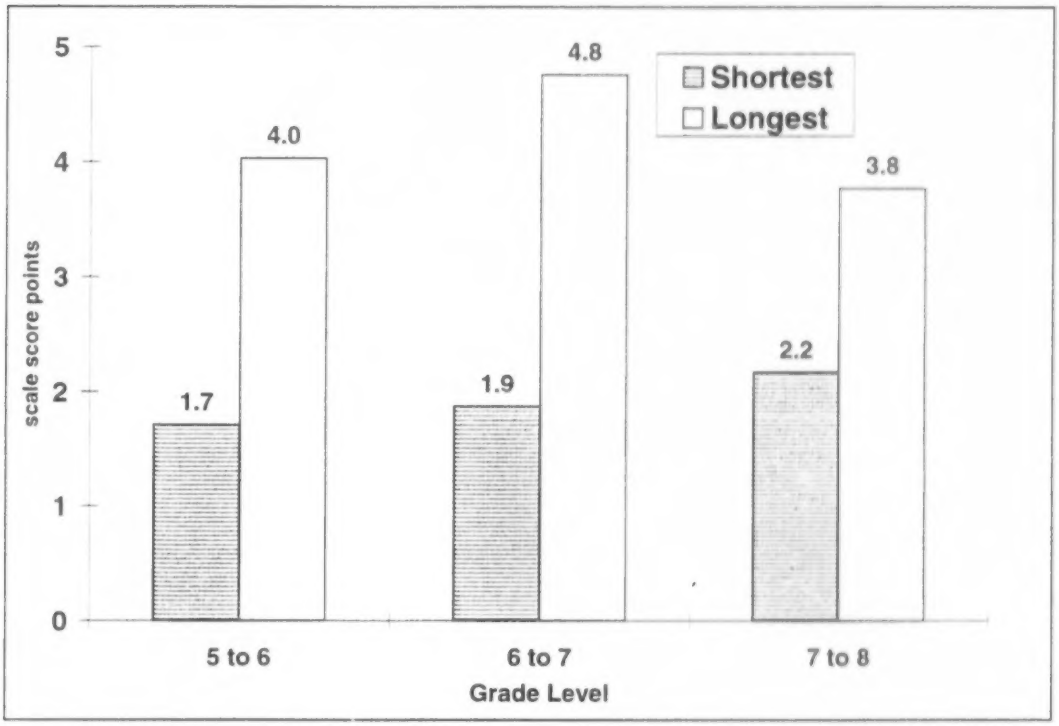

Figure 22. Actual growth in End-of-Grade Scale Scores for Reading (1995 to 1996), by length of enrollment period and grade level

- Students who were enrolled for longer periods in ALPs in 1995-96 showed more growth in EOG reading scale scores from the previous year than those students who stayed a short time (long was more than 38 calendar weeks, short was less than 8.5 calendar weeks).

- Growth was greatest in reading for seventh grade students who were enrolled for longer periods of time in ALPs. Seventh grade also had the largest difference in growth between student who had been enrolled for longer periods compared to students who had been enrolled for shorter periods in ALPs.

Note: There were too few students in grades 3 - 5 to conduct these analyses.

Summary for End-of-Grade Tests

For both reading and mathematics, ALP students performed well below the overall student population on the End-of-Grade Tests. The rate of proficiency in mathematics and reading for ALP students was also well below that of students in the general state population. State rates are around 70 percent while ALP rates ranged from 18 percent to 42 percent. The fifth grade ALP students seemed to perform better relative to all students on the mathematics EOG than ALP students in other grades. However, this pattern did not hold for reading scores. In both subject areas, grade 7 has the lowest rate of proficiency for ALP students.

For students performing at the levels of the ALP students, *expected* growth is typically higher than for students performing in an average manner. However, the ALP students did not achieve the growth that was expected based on the ABC growth formula for any grade in either mathematics or reading.

There was generally more growth in End-of-Grade Test scores for students who had longer contact with ALP programs than for students who had shorter contact. Differences were more pronounced in reading than mathematics; and eight graders showed more growth in reading for longer stays, reversing this pattern in mathematics. While assignment to length of program was not controlled, and these results do not establish a causal relationship, these results provide some evidence that exposure to the ALPs has a positive result for ALP students.

ALP students have significant educational deficiencies that put them at risk of failure. While the ALPs might be helping students to improve their academic performance, they are also dealing with significant behavioral problems that take time away from academic instruction. These data also suggest intervention early is likely to be most successful. Otherwise, ALP students start out behind, and never catch up.